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How Fast Can a Fly, Fly?

Taking a momentary vacation from his electrical research activities, Dr. Irving Langmuir recently exploded the fantastic story about the speed of the so-called deer bot-fly. This bug is reputed to have attained the surprising speed of 818 miles per hour (sound travels 740 miles per hour).

The entomologist who reported the speed of a deer fly as 818 miles per hour had observed a fly whiz by and had roughly estimated its speed at 400 yards per second.

Dr. Langmuir more or less definitely disproves the entomologist's findings with the following observations. A piece of solder roughly the dimensions of a deer fly was swung around on a string. When the solder had reached a velocity of 64 miles per hour it was no longer visible. But the entomologist had *seen* his bug go by. Dr. Langmuir wryly states that the power required to maintain a speed of 818 miles per hour would be about one-half horsepower for a deer fly. That is a good deal of power. A fly striking a human at such a rate of speed would exert a force of 310 pounds, or about four tons per square inch, and would therefore have approximately the same effect as a .30-.30 bullet. No fatalities have been reported to date from collisions with speeding flies.

Dr. Langmuir concludes that when a deer fly has his throttle wide open, he is probably doing 25 miles per hour.